

STUDENTS' MASTERY OF ASPECTUAL
DISTINCTIONS IN FRENCH

By

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DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated
to my mother,
for her love, her strength,
and her faith,
and, most of all,
for keeping the dream
alive.

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For nonnative speakers of French, tense and aspect represent complex and confusing concepts, particularly concerning the distinctions in usage of two past tenses, the perfect (passé composé) and the imperfect. Misunderstandings are due primarily to the fact that the distinction between these forms is not one of tense, but, rather, one of aspect in that they represent different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of past situations. Textbooks, which reflect the vague and contradictory terminology of certain traditional reference grammars, lack clear and effective explanations of this distinction. This study is a linguistic and pedagogical examination of this problematic area of French grammar.

Two groups of students at different points in the beginning stages of second language study were tested. The purpose of the test was to determine and compare students' control of the aspectual system of French and to examine these results in light of the contrastive analysis hypothesis and other factors affecting second language acquisition, particularly the effects of time and instruction. Both groups of students demonstrated some ability to deal with the concept in question and, on certain test items, reflected similar patterns of difficulty. However, the students with a longer period of study did not show any improvement concerning percentage of error. In addition, the results indicate that a morphologically based hypothesis of contrastive analysis is not conclusively supported.

In view of these findings, the study calls for a revision of textbook presentations on tense/aspect, concerning explanatory material as well as sequencing. Recommendations are made for more visually oriented approaches to aspect, incorporating mathematical models of aspectual distinctions derived from representations of the time line and various graphics which symbolize the limited nature of the passé composé and the unlimited nature of the imperfect.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Of all the linguistic forms relating to subjective experience, some of the richest and yet most difficult to explore are those that express time. That is why the notions of time, including the related concepts of tense and aspect, offer such a vast and varied area of study for the philosopher, the linguist, and the language teacher, whether to foreign or native speakers. For the foreign language learner who lacks the formation and meaning correspondences that constitute the native speaker's grammar, tense and aspect represent a seemingly endless source of problems and confusion. The purpose of this study is, firstly, to synthesize descriptive material needed to understand the general concepts of time, tense, and aspect and, secondly, to focus on a specific problem area for nonnative speakers of French, that is, the distinctions in usage between two past tenses: the common (nonliterary) perfect (passé composé) and the imperfect (imparfait). The data gathered from a quantitative test lead to implications about second language acquisition and specific recommendations concerning second language methodology.

Space and Time as Universal Forces

Space and time are universal forces affecting every individual's life. While space may be viewed from several perspectives, the reference here is, first of all, to the space of Earth and, secondly, to the space beyond Earth (the cosmos). Time, as well, is a concept with many interpretations, some of which are discussed below. Though time and space differ conceptually in various ways, there is one primary distinction which, because of its existence, has a direct bearing on the linguistic model proposed in the final chapter of this study. This difference stems from man's ability to comprehend these two concepts and his ability or lack of ability to affect them.

Concerning the space of Earth, man can build upon it or destroy it. In many ways, between and at both extremes, he can make his influence on space felt by the changes he brings about. He erects edifices that define and limit space and, of themselves, create additional space. He constructs roads that allow him to traverse space, bridges that span gaps, and tunnels that forge through obstacles in his path. He can move from one area (space) to another by land, air, or water. And, in fact, beyond this planet, his movement is not altogether prohibited. Technological advances have allowed man to explore and to begin to set limits in what once appeared a seemingly limitless universe of space. No matter how proportionally small these limits may be, they exist nonetheless.

However, time, unlike space, can not be similarly mastered or controlled. It can be described, categorized, measured, and even calculated. But despite the technological advancements that permit such processes, time continues to flow on, similar to the ever-rolling stream to which it is often compared. Man can remain in the same place, but not in the same moment.¹ That which is present is soon past, and that which is future is soon present for whatever occurs for any length of time will have future and past phases as well as immediate present. The movement that brings changes is time. Thus, time dominates space, and time dominates man. But man must make an attempt to understand time, and one way he does so is through the use of his language.

Time, Tense, and Aspect

Time

Time has been defined in many ways by many people. According to Bronckart, for example, it is the expression of the relation of anteriority, simultaneity, and posteriority (110). Fleischman states that time is a sequence of events, states, and actions (7). Webster's dictionary offers the following definition: "time is the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues" (2394). Some writers view time as such a complex concept that they find it difficult to avoid

repeating the word "time" in attempting to define it.

Reid offers one such example:

Time is the time-relation between the moment of speech and the process referred to. ("On the Analysis of the Tense System of French" 26)

Man comes closest to grasping this universal concept through the means he possesses of personalizing it, of relating it to his own experience. For this reason, there are clocks and calendars by which our lives and activities are regulated. This concrete personalization of time as well as the more abstract definitions given above represent the two-part categorization of the components of time proposed by Benveniste.

According to Benveniste, there are two distinct notions of time: (a) physical time and (b) chronic time. Physical time represents a uniform continuum, infinite yet segmentable. It is what each person experiences and what each one measures according to his emotions and the "rhythm of his inner life" (70). What Benveniste labels as chronic time is the time of events, the series of distinct blocks equivalent to Traugott's term "calendrical time" (207). It parallels the life of society; it corresponds to marks on a scale, recognized by all and to which are tied the immediate and the distant past. Chronic time is characterized by its permanence and its fixedness; that is, its intervals are fixed and unmovable. Hirtle makes a similar distinction of the notions of time. He refers to (a) event time, which

is the time contained in any event and (b) universe time, the container of all events (22).

To these notions must now be added that of linguistic time, or the expression of man's experience in time.

It has been said that some cultures have no concept of time or of progress, but such a statement is not entirely accurate. What those cultures may actually lack is a grammatical device for expressing location in time, a function carried out in most languages by tense.

Tense

Just as the definitions of time vary (as noted above) so too do the definitions of tense, but not necessarily in such dramatic fashion. In fact, though their terminology and manner of expression may differ, most grammarians concur on the general definition of tense. That is, most define tense as grammaticalized time reference.

Tense is man's way of mapping time onto language. It relates the time of a particular situation to some other time, usually to the moment of speaking.² It is in this way that tense is said to be deictic. That is, it is a system which relates entities to a temporal reference point. Tense, as deictic, may be either absolute or relative.³ "Absolute" refers to tenses which take the present moment as deictic center; "relative" indicates that the reference point for location in time given by the context is not necessarily the present.

As examples, expressions such as "today" and "tomorrow" may be considered absolute references since they refer to the present moment. Expressions such as "on the same day" or "on the next day" are relative as they do not necessarily have the present moment as the center of reference. Regarding verb forms, a relative reference would include such nonfinite forms as in the English sentence below, cited by Comrie (Aspect 2):

- 1.1 Having read this before, I had no need to reread it.

Some authors, such as Traugott and Anderson, for example, point to the locative nature of tense and its related concept, aspect (to be discussed in detail below). If one envisions a time line as representative of past, present, and future, it can be said that tense locates situations on that time line either with respect to the speaker or with respect to other situations. Aspect assigns limits and bounds to these situations or events. There are, therefore, two primary values in using a time line to depict the meanings and relationships of tense and aspect: (a) the time line allows visualization of how situations relate to other situations (i.e., reflects the role of tense), and (b) the time line may be used to indicate the internal temporal constituency of a situation (i.e., the function of aspect).

Aspect

As suggested above, the concepts of tense and aspect are closely related, as they are both concerned with the expression of time; but, as the previous discussion of time lines indicates, they refer to time in very different ways. Tense is by nature deictic, that is, it relates the time of the situation with another point in time. In Comrie's terminology, it represents "external time" (Aspect 8). Aspect, on the other hand, is not concerned primarily with relating the situation with another point in time. Rather, aspect focuses on the internal temporal constituency of the situation (its "internal time").

Vet is one author who presents a clear distinction between tense and aspect: tense refers to the place that the interval of the situation occupies in the time of the world; aspect is all the information that is not related to the place of the interval but to its internal structure. In other words, tense is representative of the time of a situation, and aspect is the time enclosed in the situation (Temps, aspects, et adverbes 109).

In explaining aspect, most grammarians orient their discussions from two main perspectives. The first refers to the role of the speaker and the way he views the action. Dubois, for example, states that aspect is the relation between the "protagonist and the process" (14). Moore defines aspect as "the way in which the speaker envisions

the events" (40). The second perspective relates aspect more directly to the situation or specifically, to the phases of the situation. Traugott, for example, defines aspect as the relation of the event to the time line, including its duration, whether with or without bounds (208).⁴ Brunot equates aspect with the temporal relation between the completion of an event and a given moment (La Pensée et la langue 440).

Fleischman states that tense, which is the grammaticized expression of the sequence of events, is indifferent to the internal temporal constituency of events. Aspect, however, is not indifferent in that it grammaticizes something "other than sequence," such as duration, completion or repetition (10). Imbs expresses a similar view. For Imbs, a process occupies a certain temporal space that corresponds to the time necessary for its development or to the part of its development depicted in the sentence. Aspect, then, concerns the consideration of this internal development of the process.

Pohl's discussion of aspect reflects a combination of the two main perspectives outlined above. According to Pohl, aspect is, on the one hand, the expression, or the absence of expression, of a relationship between a moment, or a span of time, considered independently from all reference to a fixed moment on the time line, including the moment of speaking and, on the other hand, a process

viewed in its development from beginning to end and without excluding what preceded the beginning or followed the end. Pohl uses the terms "aspect--durée" (durational aspect) and "aspect--temps" (time/tense--aspect). The former refers to a moment, or a succession of moments, included between the beginning and the end of a situation. The latter term refers to that which is exterior to the development of the process and detached from the duration.⁵

Finally, two slightly different approaches to the definition of aspect are found in the writings of Otto Ducháček and T.B.W. Reid. Aspect, according to Ducháček, is a way of expressing action, whether in its development (as in imperfective aspect) or in its completion (perfective aspect). It may be expressed morphologically (by verb prefixes and suffixes, for example), syntactically (by adverbs and adverbial expressions), or lexically. Ducháček focuses on the lexical expressions which he considers to be the most important (163). This way of expressing aspect includes verbs of three types: (1) those that are by meaning imperfective or nonconclusive (such as, circuler--"to circulate"), (2) those that are perfective or conclusive (such as, trouver--"to find") and (3) those that are biaspectual. i.e., those that depend on context (such as connaître--"to know").

Ducháček lists thirteen qualities that characterize verbal action. These "caractères de l'action" (characteristics

of action) are defined by Ducháček^v as the way in which the action and its phases unfold. Briefly, they are:

1. momentané - marks momentariness
2. duratif - implies duration
continuatif - continuing
3. progressif - focuses on progression of action
4. ingressif - focuses on beginning action
5. terminatif - focuses on termination of action
6. résultatif - expresses a consequence
7. imminent - implies impending action
8. itératif - marks repeated action
9. fréquentatif - indicates frequency of action,
that which is habitually repeated
10. multiplicatif - indicates a series of identical
acts considered as a whole
11. distributif - indicates a series of actions
where the actions are designated
individually
12. intensif - suggests an intensifying
13. atténuatif - suggests a lessening

In general, then, it can be said that Ducháček^v recognizes one opposition of aspect and thirteen varieties of mode of action (his characteristics of action). His aspectual distinctions can be expressed by verb tense, by verbs (lexical expression), and by adverbs. So too can his characters of action, as well as by prepositions and verbal locutions. It may be concluded, then, that while his

analysis is of interest, it does not clarify any further the French tense system or the status of aspect and modes of action. In fact, whatever may be the status of the category of "mode of action" in other languages, it does not appear to be of any major significance or utility in the description of the tense system of French beyond the semantic and stylistic range of interest.

The problem with this type of listing, as Vet notes (Temps, aspects, et adverbess 47), is the vagueness between the notions of aspect and the caractères de l'action since many of the terms named above are often cited by other grammarians to describe the functions of aspect. Ducháček himself states that aspect and the caractères de l'action may or may not intersect. For example, perfective (aspect) and momentariness (verbal characteristic) are often associated together, but they are not always linked as in the following example:

1.2 Il est né.

(He was born.)

This sentence expresses a perfective action but one which has a certain duration (183).

Certain verbs imply two or three caractères de l'action at the same time. One such example is the sentence below which reflects continuing progressive action and suggests an intensifying nature:

1.3 Le mal va croissant

(The) Evil is increasing (getting bigger and bigger).

What Ducháček concludes and what will be supported in the next section is that the concepts of aspect are not always clearly expressed in French.⁶ These concepts are even less distinctly categorized and explained by various reference grammars.

Another interesting approach is that of T.B.W. Reid who establishes the following categories: aspect, stage, and time. The first term refers to the speaker's view of the process (imperfective/perfective) and is entirely subjective. The second has a certain objective element in so far as it professes to indicate the stage which the process has reached in the course of its development (incomplete/complete), ostensibly without regard to the attitude of the speaker. These two oppositions are different in nature and should not be given the same label. Reid acknowledges that deciding upon which opposition to call "aspect" and which to call "stage" is a matter of convention as the opposition of imperfective/perfective has most frequently been exemplified by "aspect." But Reid proposes changing the terms "imperfective/perfective" to "aspect of continuance" and "aspect of attainment" ("Verbal Aspect in Modern French" 154). The category of "stage" has three members called "completion," "actuality," and "imminence." And the third major category named above, that of "time," has the traditional members of present, past, and future.

The three categories constituting Reid's system are not all of the same status. The more objective categories of time and stage, which are independent and equal, take priority. It is only after a process has been assigned to a particular time and a particular stage that the question of the highly subjective category of aspect can arise.

While Reid seems confident that this three-way categorization is justified, his explanations and examples do not necessarily substantiate his claims. If, as he suggests above, a process must first fit into an objective classification of time and stage, what precisely is the role of the subjective category of aspect? It is difficult to see how, despite his intentions, Reid's different classification system and terminology add anything to clarify the overlapping, ambiguous categories of other grammarians.

Problems of Terminology

The problem that is evident with grammatical terminology relating to aspect is not a recent development. For centuries, it was widely assumed that in French and in Western languages in general all tense distinctions depended solely on differences of time. Over a century ago, however, as a result of the study of the Slavic verb, it began to be realized that morphological oppositions of tense in Western languages such as French could correspond not only to semantic distinctions of time, but also to distinctions

of a different character. This new category, as already noted, was usually designated by a version of the term used in Slavic philology as "aspect." While the introduction of the notion of aspect made a useful contribution to the descriptions of various tense systems, its application to non-Slavic languages gave rise to certain misconceptions.

The terms often used in the West for the two principal aspects of the Slavic verb, "perfective" and "imperfective," were also widely applied to the aspects that came to be recognized in other languages. In Slavic languages, the formal opposition between perfective and imperfective aspects is normally expressed by two different verb stems: perfective and imperfective verbs. When this classification was carried over into Western languages, traditional and vague semantic descriptions of verbs of state or verbs of event were often transformed into imperfective and perfective pairs. For example, dormir ("to sleep") is the imperfective verb which corresponds to s'endormir ("to fall asleep"); tenir ("to hold") as imperfective corresponds to saisir ("to seize"), and chercher ("to seek") is viewed as imperfective compared to trouver ("to find"). These aspectual classifications were further subdivided. Some of these distinctions will be elaborated on in the following chapter. But it must be noted that in many cases, the naming of aspectual distinctions whether those actually realized in the language or those conceived

of by the individual investigator, often reflected personal and sometimes arbitrary choices and, as evidenced here, variations of terminology were abundant.

In view of these problems, Reid provides a particularly applicable quote of Vendryes, who laments this lack of agreement:

There is hardly anything in linguistics more difficult than aspect because there is nothing with more controversy and divergent opinions. There is lack of agreement concerning the definition itself of aspect as well as on the relationship of aspect and tense, on the way aspect is expressed, and on the place it occupies in the verbal system of different languages. ("Verbal Aspect in Modern French" 148, translated from French)

Reid notes that even by the 1960s there had been little change regarding the lack of clarity associated with aspect to the extent that writers felt obliged to define the theory they were following if they used the term "aspect" in their discussions. Current writers, as well, are still faced with this problem, as are, consequently, those who attempt to study and apply their explanations.

Grammarians' Treatment of Aspect in French

This section will present what several noted French grammarians say in general about the role of aspect in the French language. Specifically, it will describe the various ways the category of aspect is treated in traditional French grammars, beginning with Grevisse's Le Bon Usage (1980, originally published in 1936), considered by many as a primary reference source for questions relating to French grammar.

In Le Bon Usage, aspect is given a relatively unimportant role. What is mentioned is unclear and, at times, even misleading. For example, the sentence

1.4 Je relis la lettre.

(I am rereading the letter.)

is cited as an instance of iterative aspect, meaning the successive occurrences of several instances of a given situation, which may or may not be habitual. But since such an interpretation can not be assumed in this example, the single repetition of a single act can not accurately be termed iterative.⁷

The Grammaire du XX^e siècle takes only several lines to explain the concept of aspect while, on the other hand, Brunot's discussions of aspect in La Pensée et la langue continues for several chapters. In fact, Yvon believes that in La Pensée et la langue Brunot gives to the notion of aspect the place it deserves, which is among the primary considerations of the essential characteristics of the verb. Brunot states, however, that in French aspect does not occupy a position of importance equal to that which it occupies in other languages. The point of reference here is undoubtedly the Slavic languages where the notion of aspect is a consistent, easily identifiable category which is independent of tense.⁸

Other grammarians who also devote greater attention to the role of aspect include Dauzat, Galichet, and De Boer.

Dauzat maintains that aspect plays an important role in French but that it consists of varied means of expression (La Grammaire raisonnée (207). In Physiologie de la langue française, Galichet discusses aspect as it pertains to the phases of a process. Aspect indicates in what phase of its development the process is. He adds that because tense and aspect are often joined in the same verbal form, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them (cited in Yvon, "Aspects du verbe français" 162).

De Boer (Syntaxe du français moderne) lists five aspects which compose the "interior nature of the tenses" (712): (a) entrance into action, (b) duration, (c) accomplished state, (d) recently accomplished state, and (e) terminative action. He also lists characteristic aspects such as those recognized by other grammarians (for example, durative, iterative, etc., as mentioned previously); but despite his somewhat more detailed explanations, DeBoer still does not present a thorough treatment of aspect. One obvious shortcoming is his failure to focus on the opposition of the past tenses in French.⁹ This opposition is an essential element in understanding the nature of aspect in the French language and as such will be the focus of the following chapter.

A study of various grammatical presentations of aspect, including those cited above, leads to three generalizations: (a) The authors are unclear regarding the categories of

aspect; (b) the authors are unclear regarding the nature of aspect;¹⁰ and, finally (c) they are unclear regarding the exact role of aspect and its importance in the French language.

Notes

¹Man's ability to remain in the same place is dependent upon one's perspective. The rotation of the Earth and the path it follows in its orbit around the sun are movements that cause a change in positioning in space. Technically, then, man can not remain in the same place even if he so chooses. But, the human perception is such that this type of displacement is not experienced as "movement." Therefore, within man's range of actual experiences, he can remain in the same place, or he can move. Except for the motions of the heavens, then, motion can begin and cease, but time can not cease.

²The moment of speaking is also called the moment of utterance, moment de parole, and the présent réel, among other terms as well. It is generally, but not always, taken as the designation of the actual present moment at which the person speaks, regardless of what time he may be referring to.

³Reid describes the same concepts of absolute and relative tense using the terms "direct" and "indirect", respectively ("On the Analysis of the Tense System of French" 26). These terms may be more fitting descriptions since "absolute" refers to a process in time considered directly from the moment of speech.

⁴The terms "situation", "event," "activity," "process," etc., are often presented as distinctly different concepts. In this study, however, they may be used essentially interchangeably in the sense that they designate any action that may be plotted on the time line, either as a point or as an interval.

⁵Aspect-durée corresponds to imperfective aspect while aspect-temps is representative of perfective.

⁶In some languages, particularly the Slavic languages, aspect is very clearly expressed. But in French, which lacks a single system (such as morphological representation as is the case of Slavic languages), aspect must be expressed by rather heterogeneous manners--manners which Ducháček claims are not entirely designed for that purpose (183).

⁷Another example which Garey (92) cites as being unclear is the sentence:

a. La bombe éclate.

(The bomb is exploding.)

Grevisse uses this example to demonstrate the idea of instantaneity, but Garey reasons that it is more logically an example of durative aspect, or even iterative.

⁸See note 6 above. For a concise view of the role of aspect in the Slavic languages, specifically in Russian, the reader is referred to Mahler's dissertation (14-17).

⁹DeBoer does state that the differences among the past tenses are aspectual, but, in alluding to the theories of J.M. Buffin (1925), he does not explain exactly how these aspectual distinctions are realized. Instead, he becomes involved in what he terms subjective and objective associations and in relating the moment of the event and the period of reference. The first approach, as Garey points out (95), is highly intuitive and is responsible for several contradictions while the second approach refers to a relation which is different for each tense and, as such, is not necessarily a function of aspect.

¹⁰There is debate as to whether aspect is inherent in the verb or context-dependent. Cox claims that aspect is an independent grammatical category (233). Martin stresses that it can be inherent in the verb, that is, an integral part of its substance (18). Pohl states that aspect is strongly dependent on context, particularly in French ("Aspect-temps et aspect-durée" 178). Yvon points out that the distinction of aspects concerns not the form of the verb, but how the process is presented. More precisely, he states:

"The simple past (tense) presents the process differently than the imperfect (tense). In this regard, I see between the imperfect and the simple past, (both) capable of situating the process exactly at the same time (period), a difference of aspect, because I believe that the distinction of aspects concerns, not the form of the verb, but the presentation of the process." ("Aspects du verbe français" 173)

Most grammarians conclude, however, that aspect is both lexical as well as grammatical. In other words, aspect is both semantically and morphologically encoded.

CHAPTER TWO ASPECT IN FRENCH

Despite the fact that, in French, aspect seems to offer a striking objectivity, it remains a constant source of problems and confusion for the nonnative speaker of French, specifically regarding the distinction in usages of two past tenses, the passé composé (compound past) and the imparfait (imperfect).¹ The problem is further compounded by the fact that the passé composé and the imperfect are categorized and presented as two separate tenses when, in actuality, they refer to the same time period and are, therefore, not different "tenses." Rather, they represent different aspects of past actions or states. As Chapter One indicates, effective control of these verb forms requires, first of all, an understanding of the differences between the concepts of tense and aspect. Secondly, it requires a knowledge of how and why aspectual distinctions are realized in French. And, finally, it involves appropriate presentation and adequate practice to insure assimilation.

Imperfective/Perfective Aspect

As noted previously the meanings of the word "aspect" in French vary considerably as do the treatments of aspect.

In fact to Imbs' statement, "as many authors, as many usages" (104), may now be added the statement "as many grammarians, as many commentaries." Turning to the two specific aspectual distinctions which form the basis for this study, one finds several viewpoints represented by French grammarians. In a recent article ("L'imparfait avec et sans rupture"), Liliane Tasmowski-De Ryck cites various grammarians' descriptions of the uses of imperfective aspect: According to Sten, for example, imperfective aspect allows the consideration of an event without reference to its beginning or ending (59); Weinreich also notes that the imperfective marks the nonanteriority and the nonposteriority of situations. Its specificity is not temporal, as it is a question of an attitude of speaking by which the facts are presented as background (59); and along similar lines, Ducrot states that the main function of the imperfective is to qualify a past event by giving its essential characteristics (60).

Perfective aspect, on the other hand, is presented as focusing on the actions that took place by viewing the situation as a whole. As Comrie suggests, the use of the perfective allows the event to be considered in its entirety without regard for its internal temporal complexity (Aspect 3). The perfective may also function as a means of expressing sequenced events and states. In contrast to the imperfective, which may give the sense

of randomly distributed events/happenings, however dynamic they may be, the use of the perfective places the emphasis on the chronological order of occurrence.

Binary Oppositions

Many grammarians rely on the system of binary opposition to differentiate the uses of the perfective and imperfective aspects. Some of the more frequently cited oppositions are given in the chart below.

Table 1. Binary Oppositions in Aspect

	<u>IMPERFECTIVE</u>	vs.	<u>PERFECTIVE</u>
1.	durative		nondurative
2.	durative		punctual
3.	habitual/iterative		inceptive/terminative
4.	incomplete		complete
5.	presence of duration		absence of duration

All of these contrasting pairs focus on essentially three types of distinctions: (a) the extended period of action (durative) vs. momentary action (nondurative)--cases 1, 2, and 5, (b) repeated action vs. single occurrence--case 3, and (c) incomplete or unfinished action vs. completed action--case 4. The five oppositions cited in the chart above are quite evidently overlapping and not entirely accurate as distinct categories.

Several problems with the system of binary oppositions arise. Firstly, the descriptors are seen as mutually exclusive, or, to be more precise, the grammatical forms that represent the said descriptive categories appear

mutually exclusive. The result is that certain verbs are classified as durative while others are punctual (or imperfective/perfective, respectively). But Klum and, similarly, Sten (both qtd. in Reid, "Verbal Aspect in Modern French" 167) admit that a perfect verb may be extended or "imperfectivisé" (i.e., made imperfective). That is, its perfect value can be more or less modified and neutralized whenever it must adapt itself to the aspectually durative function of the present tense or the imperfect tense and conversely, for an imperfect verb in the nondurative aspect. In essence, what is meant here is that French verbs (with a few possible exceptions) may appear in both aspects.

Secondly, the use of the terms "durative" and "punctual" as synonymous with "imperfect" and "perfect" is not correct because the perfect can express long duration. In fact, if the duration is specified, the perfect must be used.

And finally, it is a mistake to divide all French verbs into two objective and mutually exclusive classes called, for example, imperfective and perfective verbs or durative and punctual verbs. The most that can be said is that some verbs are predominantly, or more often than not, of one category.

Aspectual Distinctions of Past Tenses

In French, there are five principal tenses which express past time, but only three past tenses offer clear aspectual distinctions.² Comrie, De Both-Diez and Ducháček, to cite only a few, support the validity of this three-way

distinction. DeBoer, as noted in Chapter One, states that the "only aspectual difference preserved in French is in the triple opposition of past tenses: passé composé, passé simple, and imparfait." (710)³

The passé composé (often called the "indefinite past") and the passé simple (the "definite past") represent the perfective aspect while the imparfait (the imperfect) reflects the imperfective. The simple past reflects action that is totally completed, from beginning to end. It has no contact with the time of speech and can not be used in a sentence where the time period has not completely elapsed. For example, the following sentence is not acceptable:

*2.1 Cette année j'allai en vacances en France.

(simple past)

(This year I vacationed in France.)

The sentence would be acceptable if either the verb were changed to the passé composé (Example 2.2) or if the time reference were changed (Example 2.3).

2.2 Cette année je suis allé en France.

(This year I went to France.)

2.3 L'année dernière j'allai en France.

(Last year I went to France.)

The passé simple and the passé composé may, at times, be used interchangeably though the passé simple functions unquestionably as the more literary tense.⁴ Some grammarians insist that there is no real difference of tense-value

between the passé simple and the passé composé and that the difference is more one of style and tone.⁵ Reid, for example, supports this view in stating that the passé simple is more objective, even "cold", compared to the subjective, active quality of the passé composé ("On the Analysis of the Tense System" 38). While such a distinction may be both valid and noteworthy, this study, which is concerned specifically with beginning level students of French and their mastery of aspectual distinctions, will focus on the uses of the passé composé and the imperfect, the two past tenses most frequently taught in first-year courses.⁶

Imperfect and Passé Composé

Regarding the past tenses, it is generally accepted that imperfective aspect is manifested in French by the imperfect tense while the perfective aspect is reflected in the passé composé. What differs from one author to the next is what qualifies these tenses, that is, specifically, what distinguishes them from each other in terms of usage. As noted previously, although the imperfect and the passé composé are classified as tenses, they are, in actuality, two aspects of the same tense (the same time period). That is, their distinguishing qualities are aspectual, not temporal. The discussions and descriptions that follow constitute traditional approaches of representing these distinctions of aspect.

Traditional Approaches

For Comrie (Aspect), an imperfective reference is one that considers the internal structure of a situation, the ongoing nature of the action, without reference to boundaries. A perfective reference presents the situation as a whole with initial and final boundaries. In view of these comments, consider the following example:

2.4 Jean lisait quand je suis entré.

imparfait passé composé

(John was reading when I entered.)

imperfect perfect

The verb in the imperfect provides background information. It serves, in Hopper's terminology (20), as a "backdrop" for the main event line. There is no reference to the beginning or ending of John's reading. On the other hand, the perfect (I entered) is presented without a reference to its internal constituency. The action of "entering" is viewed as a situation as a whole, not in phases.

Other grammarians also stress this distinction as representative of the primary functions of these two past tenses. Garey and Olson (cited in Hill, 103), for example, emphasize that the role of the passé composé is to depict the entire situation. The imperfect, on the other hand, suggests that, at the time being considered, the event which is in question had already begun, was still in progress, or was capable of either continuing or of ceasing, as in the following example:

2.5 Je chantais quand le téléphone a sonné.

(I was singing when the phone rang.)

Garey finds this example particularly illustrative of the distinctions noted above for, as he concludes, the action of "singing" may or may not have stopped when the "phone rang" (101). Without further context, the use of the imperfect in this case leaves the situation open to both possibilities. For example, sentences 2.6 and 2.7 could follow sentence 2.5. Both cases would be appropriate and logical depending on the context of the situation. Example 2.6 indicates termination of the action while 2.7 reflects continuation.

2.6 Je me suis arrêté de chanter quand le téléphone a sonné.

(I stopped singing when the telephone rang.)

2.7 Je chantais pour endormir bébé quand le téléphone a sonné. C'est pourquoi je n'y ai pas répondu. Quand mon enfant s'est endormi, j'ai pu venir au téléphone pour vous rappeler.

(I was singing to put the baby to sleep when the phone rang. That's why I didn't answer it. When my child fell asleep, I could come to the phone to call you.)

Imbs states that the passé composé has an ambiguous position in that it is composed of an auxiliary verb in

the present tense and a past participle marking accomplished action (100) This double value allows the possibility of using the passé composé to express anteriority in relation to the present moment. The anterior fact can belong either to the recent or distant past. In other words, the passé composé relates a past action whose results still endure. That is, it represents a completed action but one which is still tied to the present. Unlike the simple past, it can be used in sentences where the time period may or may not have completely elapsed, as evidenced in examples 2.8 and 2.9:

2.8 J'ai vu mon cousin il y a dix ans.

(I saw my cousin ten years ago.)

2.9 J'ai vu mon cousin aujourd'hui.

(I saw my cousin today.)

The explanations given by Grevisse are frequently found in other traditional reference grammars. One such explanation involves the notion that the passé composé represents a completed situation in a time period in the past, but one which is still considered in contact with the present. Grevisse describes the use of the imperfect as a "present in the past" (839). Such a description is not only unclear; it is also misleading.

Henry Barge, drawing on the nature of relative and absolute tenses in French, also describes the imperfect as a "present in the past" (qtd. by Yvon in "L'imparfait de l'indicatif en français" 9-22).⁷ Yvon argues strongly

against this notion. He stresses that the expression "present in the past" is not appropriate because, while the uses of the present and imperfect may at times coincide, they are reflections of different time periods. In addition, another difference lies in the fact that the imperfect may be used concurrently with another past action.

This statement does not mean that Yvon agrees with another of Bargy's assertions--that the imperfect expresses only simultaneity. While Yvon does concede that the imperfect may express simultaneity, he stresses that when it does, it does so not in isolation ("L'imparfait de l'indicatif" 7). Rather, the imperfect expresses past actions that were in progress when some other action took place since the term "simultaneity" implies the co-occurrence of two or more actions. Other writers support Yvon's position, including Mahler (Spatial Delineation of Temporal Structures), who states that the imperfect must be completed by another event to be grammatically acceptable.

Certain functions of the passé composé can parallel those of the imperfect. This is not to say that the two tenses are interchangeable but that they can express similar aspectual qualities. For example, traditional grammarians often associate "duration" with the imperfect but few mention the fact that the passé composé can also express duration, as in example 2.10, cited earlier:

2.10 Il a vécu pendant un siècle.

(He lived a century long.)

Difficulties for Students

Such disagreements concerning the meanings and usages of the passé composé and the imperfect are illustrative of the contradictory nature that characterizes many of the grammatical explanations found in traditional approaches.⁸ The preceding material is only a representative sample of the many and varied descriptions of this grammatical point available to the second language learner via classroom and textbook instruction.⁹ Yet with all this information, the nonnative speaker of French, and specifically, for the purposes of this study, the native speaker of English, continues to lack the knowledge and the confidence to deal effectively with exact distinctions of aspect. At least two primary reasons for this confusion may be proposed: (1) Traditional descriptions, such as those cited above, which are often paralleled in textbook explanations (see Chapter Four), are unclear and misleading. For example, as noted, the perfect is often described as related to punctuality (example 2.11), short duration (example 2.12), completed action with a special emphasis on the terminative point of the action (examples 2.13 and 2.14), or for simple action:

2.11 Il est arrivé à midi.

(He arrived at noon.)

2.12 J'ai regardé la télé de 8h à 9h30.

(I watched television from 8:00 to 9:30.)

2.13 Il a étudié jusqu'à 10h.

(He studied until 10:00.)

2.14 Il a fini ses devoirs.

(He finished his homework.)

In actual usage, the perfect forms (i.e., the passé composé) may be used for situations that are internally complex, such as those that last for a considerable period of time or that include a number of distinct phases, provided that the situation is still being viewed as a whole as in example 2.10, cited earlier:

2.10 Il a vécu pendant un siècle.

(He lived a century long.)

(2) Another possible source of confusion may be interlingual interference which occurs when structures or forms of the native language are inappropriately associated with target language forms.

A brief review of the applicable verbal forms of English and French illustrates how this interference arises. The passé composé in French is composed of an auxiliary verb (in the majority of cases, avoir--"to have") and a past participle. In English, the present perfect is composed of the auxiliary verb have + Verb + -ed.¹⁰ The imperfect in French is a simple form (verb stem + past ending). The simple past in English is similar (Verb

+ -ed). Contrastive analysis studies which have shown that speakers of one language look for similarities in the second language lead to the following hypothesis: the resemblance in form between the passé composé in French and the present perfect in English and between the imperfect in French and the simple past in English encourages the second language learner to make an erroneous analogy regarding the meanings of these forms.

This misapplication is highly erroneous in view of the fact that the two language systems involved are entirely different regarding the usage of these forms. The simple past and the present perfect represent temporal differences; that is, the place in time that they occupy is different. The present perfect situates the action in an area temporally contiguous to the present but the simple past cuts the action from the present, as evidenced in the following two sentences:

2.15 I lived in France for ten years.

(simple past)

2.16 I have lived in France for ten years.

(present perfect)

In French, the imperfect and the passé composé are different aspects of the same time reference. Therefore, in essence, for French the two past forms in question have aspectual distinctions; in English, the two past forms have temporal distinctions.

Research Questions

The contrastive analysis hypothesis stated previously concerning formal interlinguistic similarity can be empirically tested. Such was one of the purposes of a test administered to undergraduate students in French. If data were to show, for example, that the imperfect was selected when the passé composé should have been (that is, a simple verb form corresponding to another simple verb form), the hypothesis would be supported. There are, of course, other factors that determine a student's selection of verb forms, and these are also explored. Therefore, the purpose of the test, presented and analyzed in the following chapter, was to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent is the contrastive analysis hypothesis supported?
2. How do time and additional instruction affect students' progress toward mastery of aspectual distinctions?

These results will provide information that can be related to second language acquisition and second language methodology.

Notes

¹The predominant pattern found in most current textbooks of French is to use the terms "passé composé" (not translated into the English equivalent of "compound past") and "imperfect" to refer to these two tenses. For the sake of clarity in subsequent discussions, particularly those concerning textbook material presented in Chapter Four, the usage of these terms will follow a similar pattern throughout this study (i.e., "passé composé" and "imperfect").

²The five past tenses of French are passé composé, passé simple, imparfait, passé antérieur, and plus-que-parfait.

³It is generally acknowledged that there is also aspectual expression involved in forms other than those of the past verbal tenses. In the present tense of French, for example, the pronominalized verb form serves to draw attention to the durative nature found in the following sentence:

a. Il se fait vieux.

(He's getting old.)

In general, the present tense normally expresses continuance except in efficient statements such as:

b. J'accepte.

(I accept)

c. Je vous remercie

(I thank you)

and in usages often termed "historic present" where the use of the present tense replaces the normally expected past tense to give the effect of the events occurring before one's eyes.

⁴The passé simple represents a fact completely finished at a time in the past without consideration of the contact it may have with the present. The passé composé, on the other hand, indicates a completed action still in connection

with the present. In modern usage, the passé simple is almost exclusively a literary form, having been replaced for the most part in the spoken language by the passé composé. This pattern does not, however, preclude the use of the passé simple in spoken language as in certain dialectal varieties, nor does it in any way imply that the passé composé is inappropriate in writing. From the spoken language, the usage of the passé composé as a narrative tense for past facts has penetrated the literary language where the passé composé serves to evoke facts of a recent past and whose results are often still perceptible at the moment of writing. The principle distinction between the passé composé and the simple past is that with the passé composé the past remains attached, or at least, contiguous, to the present.

The passé composé can also alternate with the simple past even in the most classic literary language. In these cases, the nuances are less grammatical and more stylistic, reflecting the individual grammar of each one.

In a similar way, the imperfect has been "encroaching," to use Reid's phrasing ("Verbal Aspect in Modern French" 164), on the domain of the simple past in the written language increasingly since the nineteenth century. Reid cites two major reasons for this phenomenon: (a) such usage brings the living language to literature, and (b) more people are familiar with and knowledgeable of the imperfect forms. Cohen, among others, notes that certain nineteenth century writers, particularly Flaubert and Zola, used the imperfect in a literary manner to represent the words and thoughts of their characters (109).

⁵ It is misleading to say, as some writers do, that the difference between the usage of the simple past and the passé composé is one of psychological proximity. Consider the following examples:

- a. Ronsard est mort en 1585.

(Ronsard died in 1585.)

- b. Ronsard mourut en 1585.

(Ronsard died in 1585.)

No writer or speaker of contemporary French has personally experienced the death of Ronsard or remembers it happening or has been able to form a direct judgement about it. The distinction between the two examples is one of register, that is, the difference between a written and predominantly literary form and a colloquial and predominantly spoken form.

⁶The usage of the passé simple would be the topic of another valuable study. However, it does not warrant inclusion in this particular study since it is a verb form generally encountered in literature and for the most part is not presented in first-year language courses. If it is presented at all, it appears near the end of both the course (second semester) and the textbook and, as such, is not a concept to which most beginning students are exposed or which they have much, if any, opportunity to practice.

⁷Bargy's work first appeared in 1925 (Deuxième Cahier des études françaises). It is concisely summarized in another important grammatical treatise of that period, Yvon's study of the imperfect in French (1926).

⁸For example, Reid criticizes Imbs' somewhat inconsistent statements and terminology for the following reasons. Imbs identifies three principle aspectual choices: (a) incomplete/complete, which is the most fundamental, (b) durative/punctual (or momentaneous), and (c) imperfective/perfective. But elsewhere in his writings, Imbs identifies the "perfective" with "punctual" and the "imperfective" with "durative." It is not clear whether there are really three choices as Imbs intends, or two.

⁹The more recent approaches of Cox, for example, with a focus on the inclusion or exclusion of the inchoative (beginning) point and of Molendik, Monnerie, and Moore, who all view the perfect/imperfect difference in terms of the presence or absence of limits, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four as they relate to Mahler's mathematical model of aspectual distinction.

¹⁰Not all past participles in English are formed by adding -ed to the verb. Consider, for example, "bought," "written," "sung." But, even when English requires irregular verb forms such as these, the present perfect tense is still compound: "I have bought," "I have written," "I have sung."

CHAPTER THREE
TEST: METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Experience in teaching French to native speakers of English has shown that one of their most frustrating concerns is their inability to distinguish exactly when to use the passé composé and the imparfait. Although, in general, teachers, students, and, to some extent, textbooks devote a certain amount of attention to this particular part of the structural system, ineffective results continue to occur.¹ That is, students rarely develop a level of comprehension that enables them, when required, to select correctly the aspectual form needed for a given situation. They themselves comment on their confusion and their need to formulate some sort of reliable guide to rectify the problem.² For these reasons and for the role that time and instruction may play in the acquisition of aspectual distinctions, a test was developed which would provide empirical data for the research questions posed at the end of the previous chapter and summarized below:

(a) Is the contrastive analysis hypothesis supported? This hypothesis states that students seek a one-to-one correspondence between their first language and the second language. When applied to this study, then, the contrastive

analysis hypothesis would be supported if students selected the French verb form that is most similar to the form English would require for a given sentence.

(b) What other influences need to be considered? By analyzing the differences and the similarities of two groups of students at different stages of instruction, one should be able to consider the effects of time, exposure to the language, and instruction in the forms in question on language learning. The answers to these questions relate directly to second language acquisition and methodology and, specifically, to the teaching of this part of the French verbal system.

Description of Test

The test for this study consists of a passage (see Appendix A) containing sixteen verb choices of either passé composé or imparfait. Students were asked to select the verb form appropriate for the given sentence. They were not asked to provide the verb forms since it is usage and not knowledge of morphology that is of primary concern in this study.

The passage relates a simple, realistic account of an outing in a nearby nature park. The setting, as well as the activities that occur, are all familiar to the students. Such familiarity was considered important since it is necessary to involve the students as much as possible in the context of the story, thereby turning their focus from the form of the verb to the usage of the verb.

Another consideration was to construct the passage in such a way as to make the verb selection as unambiguous as possible. That is, the student who understands the distinctions in usage between the passé composé and the imperfect should be able to select only one of the two verb forms for each instance. Native French speakers who were consulted regarding the choices affirmed the validity of the clearcut distinctions of all sixteen verbs in the passage.

Methodology

Before the test was administered to the two groups involved in the study, several pre-tests were conducted to check for clarity and to ascertain a reasonable time period to allow for completion of the test.³ Both intermediate and advanced students found the instructions and the visual presentation of the passage to be straightforward. Advanced students were able to complete the test in three minutes or less while students at the intermediate level took slightly longer. In view of these times, it was decided that a six minute time limit was reasonable and sufficient for beginning students. In fact, six minutes proved to be an ample length of time for most students, allowing many of them several minutes to review their answers before time was called.

The two groups of students who were the subjects of the study were at different stages of beginning level French. Group 1 consisted of students near the end of

their first semester of French while Group 2 was composed of students nearing the end of the second semester of elementary French. Although the first-semester group had only recently taken up the concept of the aspectual distinctions of the passé composé versus the imperfect, they had already been formally tested on the material in class. The second-semester group had had more time to hear and use the two aspectual forms since their first exposure to the concept (at least four months prior to the time of the study) though, in general, they had not been formally drilled on the contrast since that time.

In all, a total of 467 students were tested (316 in the first-semester group and 151 in the second-semester group). The test was administered to the students during their regular class period using the following procedure which was repeated with each class. The instructors of each class designated ten minutes either at the beginning or end of a class period during the final two weeks of the semester. This occurrence at the end of the semester was necessary to allow the first-semester students adequate opportunity to study both verb tenses (i.e., aspectual markers).

To insure consistency in testing procedures among the twenty-three classes involved in the study, the researcher administered and timed the test in each class. After being told that their participation was a crucial part of the research, the students were given the two page

test (page 1 contained the instructions and served as a cover sheet; page 2 contained the test passage). The instructions, which were written in English and were read aloud while the students followed along, were:

On page 2 you will find a passage for which you must select between the passé composé and the imparfait.

Step 1: When you are told to begin, turn to page 2 and read through the entire passage.

Step 2: Read the passage again, and based on your knowledge of the usages of the passé composé and the imparfait, select the verb form you consider correct and appropriate.

CIRCLE YOUR SELECTION.

After reviewing these instructions, the students were told to turn to page 2 and to begin the test for which they would have exactly six minutes. At the conclusion of the six minutes, they were asked to provide information about their language study background. Both groups were asked to indicate how many years, if any, they had studied French prior to their present course. In addition, second-semester students were asked to indicate whether they had taken the first-semester French course at the university where this study was conducted and, if so, when. Of the 316 first-semester students, 37% had had no previous exposure to French and 46% had had from one to two years. Similarly, of the 151 second-semester students, 30% had not studied

French previously except for the first-semester course. 32% had studied French from one to two years. 85% had recently taken the first course in the elementary sequence.⁴

The two courses in question which comprise the beginning sequence in French are taught emphasizing development of the four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The techniques used in the classroom are based on the direct method.⁵

Before turning to the quantitative analysis of the test, one point should be mentioned regarding the reactions on the part of the students. The majority of the students responded favorably to the nature of the test; that is, they felt that there was a definite need for the purpose of the study. Some students actually apologized for their lack of accuracy with verbal usages, while others wrote messages on the test to indicate their concern with their performance and their desire to help improve the situation for future language learners. The point of mentioning these comments is to substantiate even further the need and interest as felt not only by teachers but by students as well for the purpose of a study such as this one.

Results

After the tests were administered, the scoring of correct/incorrect response selection was done. All errors were plotted on charts to reveal possible patterns. (See Appendix B for a numerical summary of the errors for each

verb choice for both groups of students). Of the 316 first-semester students who took the test, only three papers had to be eliminated. These papers were discarded because less than one-third of the test was attempted. No papers with a similar percentage of unanswered items appeared among the 151 second-semester students. Though there were some blanks (that is, no choice made) on other papers for both groups, in no case did they represent more than 50% of the test nor, in general, did they follow any specific pattern. The possible significance of these unanswered items, however, will be discussed in this chapter with the analysis of Table 5. In the tables that follow and throughout the analysis of the data, the first-semester students will be designated as "Group 1" while the second-semester students will be referred to as "Group 2."

Summary of Results by Groups

Table 2 presents a general summary of the performance of each group. The figures were tabulated in the following manner. For each group, the total number of possible answers was derived by multiplying the total number of students by sixteen (the number of verb choices in the passage). From these figures (total possible answers), the number of blanks was subtracted, giving the actual number of responses per group. Dividing these totals into the total number of errors of each group gave a percentage of errors.⁶

 Table 2. Summary of Group Performance

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
total students ⁷	313	151
possible answers	5008	2416
unanswered items	34	7
total responses	4974	2409
total errors	979	490
% error	19.68%	20.34%

As Table 2 demonstrates, the percentages of error for each group are very similar. Mistakes accounted for approximately one-fifth of the responses of both groups.⁸ Strikingly, Group 1 had an error percentage of slightly less than 20% while the percentage of error for Group 2 was slightly higher than 20%. These figures contradict what might normally be expected as the students with more experience and more exposure to the language proved to have a higher percentage of errors.

The lack of improvement of the second group is reflected also in the number of perfect papers (i.e., all sixteen verb choices correct) for each group. Group 2 had a slightly lower percentage of perfect papers at 6.6% (ten students) compared to the 6.7% (twenty-one students) of Group 1.

Although this difference in percentage points does not have statistical significance, it does correspond to the overall performance levels of each group.

What do these conclusions indicate about the effects of time on students' mastery of a second language? While it may be maintained that the time factor involved (that is, length of study) is important for the development of certain skills, these findings suggest that it may not necessarily be how long one has studied a particular concept that is the primary factor, but rather how recently it has been studied consciously. In fact, the results of Group 2 reflect overall a certain amount of regression. Certainly other reasons for these errors must be taken into account. Some of these factors, particularly those which pertain directly to instruction, will be considered in Chapter Four in a discussion of the relevance of these findings to second language acquisition and research.

Analysis of Verb Selections

Table 3 focuses on each individual verb selection showing the percentage of errors for both groups for each of the sixteen verbs.

Table 3. Percentage of Errors by Group per Verb

<u>Correct Verb</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
1. faisait	7.19 (%)	11.30 (%)
2. j'ai décidé	6.41	2.00
3. n'avions pas	42.90	54.00
4. voulions	34.20	29.10
5. sommes partis	16.70	8.70
6. sommes sortis	15.70	17.90
7. avons traversé	18.90	26.70
8. sommes arrivés	18.97	5.30
9. sommes montés	16.40	16.60
10. était	4.81	2.00
11. commençaient	21.40	23.20
12. chantaient	24.40	20.70
13. avons marché	35.30	37.80
14. avons pris	7.40	9.30
15. avons mangé	17.00	16.70
16. avons continué	38.50	44.70

Approximately half of all students responded incorrectly on one particular verb (#3-n'avions pas). Such a high percentage of error on this item is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that the verb avoir ("to have") is one of the most frequent that students encounter and one

which, when used in a past context, is very often expressed in the imperfect form. It is possible that the presence of negation in this case may have influenced the students, causing them to make an erroneous analogy between the English that would be similarly required and the French form. More details about this possibility will be given in the discussion of the contrastive analysis hypothesis later in this chapter. More information will also be offered about the other verbs with high percentages of error for both groups: #16-avons continué, #13-avons marché, and #4-voulions.⁹

The findings in Table 3 are somewhat puzzling. Of the sixteen verb choices, six should be in the imperfect (imparfait). Of these six verb choices, four were answered incorrectly by one-fifth to one-half of all the students. The only imperfect verbs with somewhat low percentages of errors were the first verb in the passage (#7-faisait) and #10-était. The reason for the fact that the second-semester students, when compared to the first-semester students, made fewer mistakes with être but more with faire is unclear, but several explanations for the overall high level of correct responses may be proposed: (a) Students have learned that the first verb of a passage usually "sets the scene" (fulfills a descriptive purpose) and therefore takes the imperfect. (b) "Il faisait beau" is an idiomatic expression with the verb faire to describe weather. Weather expressions in the past as opening sentences

of a narrative require the imperfect for descriptive purposes.

(c) A third possible explanation is highly speculative but can not be categorically ruled out. The students in the beginning stages of language study may be making a false analogy between the English verb to be and the corresponding French verb found in the idiomatic expression "il faisait beau" ("it was nice weather") since they encounter the verb to be (être) most often in the imperfect. This speculation is substantiated by the low percentage of errors with être (#10-était): 4.8% and 2% for Groups 1 and 2, respectively. As noted, however, this reasoning must be considered a highly questionable speculation since it involves assuming what mental process may be taking place and as such can not be proven. What can be validated, though, is the importance of where the verb occurs with respect to the unfolding of the narrative as the basis for the first two possible explanations given above.¹⁰

Other questions involving the imperfect verb choices must also be raised: (a) If students understand the descriptive function of the imperfect (as their correct usages of #7-faisait and #10-était seem to indicate), why did they not recognize the descriptive value of #11-commençaient and #12-chantaient? (b) Both groups of students had difficulties with #13-avons marché and #16-avons continué (that is, they incorrectly chose the imperfect for these verbs). Both of these verbs imply

motion. Yet with other verbs of motion (#5-sommes partis, #6-sommes sortis, #8-sommes arrivés, for example) their percentage of error was much lower. These results indicate that it is highly probable that the semantics of the verbs in question has affected students' choices. The first two verbs mentioned above appear in the following sentences:

3.1 Nous avons marché pendant trois heures.

(We walked for three hours.)

3.2 Après, nous avons continué notre promenade.

(Afterwards, we continued our walk.)

Both of these instances imply a certain amount of duration. The fact that beginning students are often instructed that duration in the past is expressed through the use of the imperfect may account for their tendency to select the imperfect for these verbs. The two verbs that also deal with motion and continued activity (durational) that receive the next highest percentage of error (#9-sommes montés)/"climbed" and #7-avons traversé/"crossed") seem to corroborate this speculation.

Group Comparisons

Table 4, a rank ordering of the errors of both groups, identifies clearly which verbs caused the most problems. Specifically, it displays to what extent their degree of difficulty differed or coincided from one group to the other.

Table 4. Rank Ordering of Errors

<u>Correct Verb</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
n'avions pas	1	1
avons continué	2	2
avons marché	3	3
voulions	4	4
chantaient	5	7
commençaient	6	6
avons traversé	7	5
avons mangé	8	9
sommes partis	9	13
sommes montés	10	10
sommes sortis	11	8
sommes arrivés	12	14
avons pris	13	12
faisait	14	11
j'ai décidé	15	16
était	16	15

The table indicates that both groups of students corresponded exactly on their first four most difficult items. They also had the same three items in the next grouping of difficulty, though in reverse order. Differences begin to appear in the middle to lower range of difficulty. The differences that stand out between the two groups are Group 2's apparent control of sommes partis, but lack of control of faisait (see previous discussions of faire). Notably the least difficult items for both groups coincided (était, j'ai décidé) though the order was interchanged.

The purpose of including this rank ordering is to better understand what Table 2 shows. That is, when viewed together, these two tables underscore the fact that second-semester students are having essentially the same difficulties with aspectual distinctions as first-semester students (Table 4), but to a slightly greater degree (Table 2).

Table 5 displays a comparison of the unanswered items that appeared on the papers from both groups. Recall that any paper with less than one-third of the verbs answered was discarded (essentially, then, three from Group 1, and none from Group 2). Therefore, the numbers of blanks represented in Table 5 were randomly distributed throughout the passage.

Table 5. Blanks per Group

<u>Correct Verb</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
faisait	0	0
j'ai décidé	1	0
n'avions pas	5	1
voulions	3	0
sommes partis	2	1
sommes sortis	0	0
avons traversé	2	1
sommes arrivés	1	0
sommes montés	2	0
était	1	1
commençaient	0	0
chantaient	5	1
avons marché	4	0
avons pris	2	0
avons mangé	2	1
avons continué	4	1
total	34	7

If we compare this table with Table 4 (Rank Ordering of Errors), we see that for Group 1 an interesting pattern emerges: the verb choices receiving the most blanks correspond to the top five most difficult verb items. For Group 2, no such pattern emerges.

Table 5 also shows that Group 1 left almost five times as many blanks as Group 2, a possible reflection of their stage in the language learning process characterized by a certain degree of indecision. On the other hand, Group 2 shows the beginnings of a trend that increases as students progress in second language study; that is, a feeling of more confidence and assuredness.¹¹ Unfortunately, however, though the second-semester students appear less indecisive in their selections overall they did not score better than the first-semester students.

Preliminary Conclusions

To summarize the findings to this point, the following statements can be made: Two groups of students at different points in the beginning stages of second language study were tested on a particular part of the structural system of that language and produced somewhat similar results. Both groups demonstrated some ability to deal correctly with the concept in question (aspectual distinctions). Surprisingly, however, the students with a longer period of study and exposure to the language (Group 2) had a slightly higher percentage of errors overall. On certain

verb items, both groups seem to have had similar problems so that their pattern of least difficult to most difficult answers is at times parallel. One major difference, however, occurs with the number of unanswered items for each group. Papers from the group with less experience in the second language (Group 1) reflected much more hesitancy.

Role of Contrastive Analysis

These findings may now be related to the research questions posed earlier in Chapter Two. The contrastive analysis hypothesis states that because second language learners seek a one-to-one correspondence between languages, they will select the target language form that most closely resembles the first language form for a given situation.¹² The results of this study do not, in and of themselves, serve to substantiate this claim. The following chart (Table 6) presents the data that support this conclusion. The chart was compiled in the following manner. For each of the sixteen verbs in the test passage, the English form that would be most appropriate and natural from a native speaker's viewpoint was listed (Column 1). Column 2 shows the French verb form that would correspond to the English verb in form as specified through the contrastive analysis hypothesis. For example, for the sentence

3.3 Samedi dernier, j'ai décidé d'aller à Paynes
Prairie avec mon ami, Bob,

the English equivalent in this context would be 3.4 and not 3.5:

3.4 (I decided to go to Paynes Prairie with my friend, Bob,)

*3.5 (I have decided to go to Paynes Prairie, etc.)

Since English requires a simple past verb form in this case, the student operating under a morphologically based system of contrastive analysis would select the simple verb form in French, which would be the imperfect.¹³

The correct French verb required is listed in Column 3.

Finally, to demonstrate students' actual performance, Column 4 represents the rank ordering of errors (from Table 4) with "1" equalling the most errors to "16" equalling the least errors.

Table 6. Contrastive Analysis of Forms

<u>Required English Form</u>	<u>Corresponding French Form</u>	<u>Correct French Form</u>	<u>Rank of Errors</u>	
			<u>Gr.1</u>	<u>Gr.2</u>
1. it was	I	I	14	11
2. I decided	I	PC	15	16
* 3. we didn't have	PC	I	1	1
4. we wanted	I	I	4	4
5. we left	I	PC	11	8
6. we went out	I	PC	11	8
7. we crossed	I	PC	7	5
8. we arrived	I	PC	12	14
9. we climbed	I	PC	10	10
10. was	I	I	16	15
*11. were beginning	PC	I	6	6
*12. were singing	PC	I	5	7
13. we walked	I	PC	3	3
14. we took (had)	I	PC	13	12
15. we ate	I	PC	8	9
16. we continued	I	PC	2	2

*(See explanation in note 13)

I=imperfect

PC=passé composé

Proponents of contrastive analysis, such as Charles Fries, Robert Lado, and Carl James, state that it is the differences between the native language and the target language that cause the most difficulties for students.¹⁴ If this were true, then students would make the most errors on items where the contrastive analysis hypothesis predicts the imperfect but where French requires the passé composé, and the least errors where the imperfect is predicted and required. In this test passage, as Figure 2 indicates, there are only three cases where the predictions and the actual usage patterns correspond (#1, #4, #10). Indeed, two of these three forms did account for lower number of errors (#1 and #10). But the errors for item #4, in comparison, were relatively high (34% for Group 1 and 29% for Group 2). In addition, for the instances where the contrastive analysis hypothesis predicts difficulties, there is wide variation in percentages of errors (from 2% to 54%). The findings of this study do not lend support to the validity of a contrastive analysis hypothesis which is morphologically based.¹⁵ They do not, however, provide information regarding other applications of contrastive analysis.

Previous studies involving the contrastive analysis hypothesis with different language groups have focused on other areas of language acquisition. For example, Lehn and Slager studied the phonemic difficulties of Arabic

speakers learning English as did Koutsoudas and Koutsoudas with Greek and English (Robinett and Schachter, 32-40 and 41-62, respectively). Two studies that have gathered empirical data to justify their conclusions regarding the role of contrastive analysis are Whitman's (1972) study of Japanese speakers learning English and Tran-Thi-Chau's (1975) study of Spanish speakers. Both of these studies indicate that contrastive analysis is not an adequate predictor of errors and that interference from the native language may play a relatively minor role in language learning.

From studies such as these and from the present study the following conclusions may be drawn concerning the value of contrastive analysis in second language acquisition. Firstly, contrastive analysis provides useful data about the language systems in question. Proponents of contrastive analysis have never claimed that it could predict all errors or all occurrences of errors. To reject the hypothesis on such grounds is not justified. Secondly, contrastive analysis can facilitate learning by focusing attention on problem areas which the teacher can then assess and present in the most effective manner. Assessment means that identified areas of difficulty may or may not be significant points in grammar or in communication for the language learner. Two other factors must also be considered--the functional load of the item in question and the level of instruction of the students.

Other Factors

In addition to the role that contrastive analysis might play in students' performance, it was stated, as part of the second research question, that other influences must be considered. "Time" was given as one of the factors to be examined in this study. Results have indicated, however, that additional time and exposure (that is, length of study) in the target language in the classroom setting are not determining factors and may not have obvious beneficial effects. In view of the slight regression of second-semester students, it appears that a more telling factor to consider is the role that instruction has in students' overall comprehension of a particular concept. Instruction in this sense includes presentation of the concept, statement of rules, and practice and review of material. Such considerations will be the focus of the following chapter.

Notes

¹A discussion of how aspect is treated in several current French textbooks is given in Chapter Four.

²In an informal survey conducted in the Spring of 1985, a class of second-semester beginning French students was asked to list the areas of French grammar which caused them the greatest difficulty and/or with which they felt the least confident. Of 58 students responding, 22 cited the differences in usage of the passé composé versus the imperfect.

³The pre-test groups consisted of two intermediate classes (a total of thirty-eight students) and one advanced class of eight students.

⁴Background information was also solicited regarding each student's native language, if not English. The test results of these students were not found to be significantly different from those of the native English speakers.

⁵According to the principles of the direct method, the target language is taught through exclusive use of the target language. To a large extent, this method was followed fairly consistently among the twenty-three classes involved in this study (that is, with only limited reliance on English for explanatory purposes). An interesting follow-up study might compare the results of this study with those of another study involving students who have been exposed to different teaching methods.

⁶Although the second group was half the size of the first group (151 students compared to 316 students), using percentages allows an equivalence of perspective.

⁷For Group 1, the total number of students (313) represents the total number of students participating in the study (316) minus the three papers that were eliminated due to what was considered to be an excessive number of unanswered items.

⁸The terms "mistakes" and "errors" are used interchangeably throughout the analysis of test results. That is, the difference that Corder and others attribute to these terms

does not relate significantly to this particular study. However, for further discussion on the concept of "mistake/error" distinctions, see Corder (1981).

⁹The verb voulions (#4) is a similar case to avons (#3) in that it is a rather common verb and one which students are more accustomed to working with in the imperfect in past tense contexts.

¹⁰De Both-Diez has studied the role of aspect as a narrative function. Similarly, Silva-Corvalán ("Tense and Aspect in Oral Spanish Narrative") presents an interesting analysis of tense and aspect in oral Spanish narrative.

Briefly, though, in French, it can be said that at the beginning of a narration, one often finds the imperfect of introduction (imparfait d'ouverture). Its usage in this case is to spark the reader's attention. The quality is generally imperfective and often accompanied by a temporal indication. In the middle of a narrative the imperfect may present simultaneous or background actions. After the conjunction comme the imperfect is the more common past form. The imperfect also functions to express background as well as primary actions. In many cases it may be a stylistic variant selected by certain writers to put special points or scenes in focus.

¹¹Pre-tests conducted with intermediate and advanced students support this observation.

¹²Many authors in the area of second language acquisition, including Victoria Moore, support the contrastive analysis hypothesis. In a 1981 article, Moore states that it is students' reliance on their native language system that leads to erroneous comprehension of the French system ("L'anglophone et l'apprentissage du passé" 39).

¹³The instances for the usage of the English present perfect (have + Verb + -ed) are not applicable in this particular passage. Therefore the complementary part that derives from the hypothesis can not be tested here. That is, if English requires a compound past, students will choose the compound form in French (the passé composé). The only compound forms permissible in English in this passage are the negative "didn't have" (however, see previous discussion) and the past progressives ("were beginning" and "were singing"). An informal survey revealed that students thought that these forms did not imply a corresponding compound form. The test, then, for the contrastive analysis hypothesis as realized in this passage was whether students selected the simple verb form in French when English required a simple form.

¹⁴Such statements are widespread in books dealing with second language acquisition. However, for a concise view of the history of contrastive analysis and arguments associated with it, see Croft (Section Two, 91-119).

¹⁵Studies have shown the contrastive analysis hypothesis to be more successful in predicting difficulties in pronunciation. Less research has been done in the morphological area.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Speculations about Second Language Acquisition

After an additional four months of study and exposure to the language, the second-semester students performed no better than their first-semester counterparts, and, in fact, regressed slightly, at least in this particular grammatical area. The fact that the second-semester students had a lower percentage of correct responses than the first-semester students indicates clearly that they are affected by time and instruction, but not necessarily in the way that would be expected and certainly not in the way that would be hoped for. These results lead to several speculations: (a) Students who have had the benefit of more recent instruction concerning a particular grammatical point may apply that knowledge more accurately than those who have studied the point previously and have had as a result more opportunities to apply it over a period of several months. (b) Students at an even slightly higher level may tend to rely on a far-from-perfect intuition that results in both a false sense of confidence and in linguistic misapplications. (c) The focus and nature

of the classroom instruction and syllabus do not always allow sufficient reinforcement of previously learned (previously studied) material.

The first of these speculations speaks to second language acquisition in general and the second to individual differences of learners while the third relates directly to teaching methodology.

It is widely accepted that individual learners approach the language learning task in many different ways, depending on their cognitive styles. Some language learners are more analytic while others reflect a more gestalt orientation.¹ The results of this study seem to indicate that for certain language tasks, at least, neither approach is necessarily more productive than the other. The point here is that since the majority of students had incorrect responses (93% of all papers contained at least one error) it may not be the learning patterns of students that play the key role in determining final success, but rather it may be the pattern of instruction that has primary responsibility. This conclusion ties the speculation about second language acquisition directly to that of teaching methodology and substantiates the claim that the important question to consider regarding teaching methods is whether or not they respond effectively to the needs and progress of students. It is the position of the researcher that beginning students are not making substantial progress towards mastery

of aspectual distinctions in French because explanations about the past tenses have been based in large part on certain traditional grammarians' definitions and approaches. While these explanations may be acceptable to speakers who are able to rely more on a developed intuition than on any analytic method, they do not serve as reliable guides for beginning students to follow.

Problems with Traditional Approaches

One problem that comes from the traditional grammarians is the lists of usages that differentiate the passé composé and the imperfect. It is not the length of these lists that prohibits learning; many students prove to be quite adept at memorizing quantities of grammatical and lexical information. Rather, the primary prohibitive factor is the overlapping nature of these terms and their lack of specificity. Such problems were noted in Chapter Two involving, for example, the terms "iterative" and "habitual."

Another problem stemming from traditional grammarians' definitions is that the terms used are unfamiliar to the average beginning language student (for example, "iterative," "habitual," even "perfect" and "imperfect" are confusing and misleading). To the language teacher and perhaps to the advanced language student more accustomed to such grammatical terminology, they may be an efficient means of reference though not necessarily a precise one. To the beginning language student, however, they are only abstract. To explain these terms often takes longer than

the time allowed to put them into practice. Judging from the course content and suggested syllabi of most beginning textbooks (that is, the amount of material to be covered in a specified period of time), classroom time becomes a precious commodity which could be spent more profitably on the application of a particular point than on lengthy explanations of it.

A third problem with the approaches of traditional grammarians is the lack of clarity that results when the application of these grammatical terms is attempted. If it happens that, after explanations, students understand, for example, "durative" as a grammatical concept most often associated with the imperfect, they will inevitably have difficulties with the sense of the following sentence:

4.1 J'ai habité en Géorgie de 1957 à 1980.

(I lived in Georgia from 1957 to 1980.)

"From 1957 to 1980" expresses clearly a duration of time, but the verb is, correctly, in the passé composé, not the imperfect. As the analysis of current textbooks, which appears later in this chapter, will demonstrate and, as the review of traditional grammars has already shown, expressing duration is most frequently given as a characteristic function of the imperfect, while a perfective situation is one which is viewed as a "single whole" without reference to its internal temporal constituency or to its phases. Both of these explanations are contradicted

by this one example because, as Mahler notes (Spatial Delineation 74), the use of de...à... refers directly to the three phases of the situation--the beginning, the ending, and the duration between these points.

To sum up, then, the beginning language student faces three major problems arising from the approaches of traditional grammarians:

1. lists of overlapping and unspecific terminology to describe usages
2. unfamiliar or abstract terminology
3. unclear applications/contradictions

The question, therefore, is to what extent these traditional approaches are actually incorporated into textbooks designed for beginning French classes. To answer such a question, it is useful to review the explanations concerning aspect found in textbooks currently being used as a basis for instructions. While it is acknowledged that the textbook is not the only source of material in instruction, it is, in most cases, the primary source and the primary reference tool for the student.

While it is the lack of improvement of second-semester students that stands out in this study, a view of the overall data indicates that all students (both first and second-semester levels) have difficulties with the usage of the passé composé and imperfect. For the two groups, only 6.9% had all responses correct. When data were examined in terms of total years of study even those students with

several years of previous experience (study) in French showed similar weaknesses. Therefore, it is important to know what characterizes textbook presentations on these past tenses of French. Sixteen textbooks among those currently on the market and noted for being widely advertised and sold were selected for analysis (Refer to Appendix C for the listing of titles.)² Since these textbooks are used by many students nationwide, it is felt that they represent to a large degree the type of explanatory materials the students in the present study may have received.³

Analysis of Textbooks

The most widely distributed method among the textbooks reviewed here for explaining the differences in usage between the passé composé and the imperfect is to give a listing of the characteristics associated with each tense. These lists employ the sort of traditional terminology found in reference grammars. The following is a representative sample⁴:

The imperfect is the descriptive past tense. It also expresses continuous, habitual, or repetitive actions. (Perspectives 180; Entrée en Scène 351; Face à Face 288)

The imperfect expresses habitual past actions, a state of affairs in the past, or continuous past action. (French: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, 257)

The imperfect describes circumstances and conditions, such as time, weather, physical appearance, etc. (Contacts 309; En Route 369)

The passé composé indicates a completed action or state. (Découverte et Création 224)

The passé composé expresses actions that are not descriptive or continuous in function. (Thémé et Variations 225)

While the majority of the sixteen textbooks present essentially the same general information, the explanations which qualify that information and the examples that reflect it may vary considerably from one book to another. In many cases, instead of clarifying an already obscure definition, these elaborations may actually compound the students' confusion. Consider, for example, one textbook which, after giving the first definition cited above, provides the following simplification:

The imperfect expresses an action that lasted over a period of time, compared to a quick action in the passé composé. (Perspectives 394)

If the student accepts this generalization, he will undoubtedly have difficulty with the use of the passé composé in sentences such as example 4.1 discussed earlier in this chapter:

4.1 J'ai habité en Géorgie de 1957 à 1980.

Binary Oppositions

Reflecting another characteristic found in traditional grammarians' approaches towards aspect, a number of the textbooks use the system of binary opposition either as primary explanatory material or as supplementation.

Rendez-vous, Bonjour, ça va?, Départ--Arrivée, and Invitation stress the distinction of duration versus momentariness

while Parole et Pensée and French: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing focus on the expression of descriptions versus actions. Langue et Langage, Entrée en Scène, and Face à Face combine both of these approaches.

Rendez-vous and Bonjour, ça va? state that the use of the passé composé implies that the duration of a completed action is not what is being considered while the use of the imperfect, on the other hand, emphasizes that duration. In these textbooks, as well as in Départ--Arrivée, the passé composé is said to indicate an action which has been completed at a specific moment in the past. (Mahler emphasizes that "duration" is a misleading term to use when making a basic comparison between the passé composé and the imperfect. The more appropriate question is whether the event is viewed with or without endpoints. "Incomplete" is another misleading term if used in connection with the past for the idea of unfinished is contradictory to past.) Départ--Arrivée adds, however, that while the imperfect is used for action that was going on for a period of time, it represents an incompleting action, or one without a definite time restriction. This sort of explanation might aid the student in avoiding problems with example 4.1:

4.1 "J'ai habité en Géorgie de 1957 à 1980"

But, the textbook's use of the word "moment" in this context is still troublesome. This type of confusion is likely

to be reduced given an explanation such as the following found in Invitation:

The passé composé expresses an event that had a known beginning or end or a specified duration that may vary from a few moments to many years. (260)

Parole et Pensée establishes two categories of verbs based less on the contrast between durative and nondurative, but more on description versus action. The imperfect is designated as the "tense of description" and the passé composé as the "tense of action." Students are told that être ("to be") and avoir ("to have") are verbs that reflect descriptions, not actions, and are, therefore, most often in the imperfect. Other verbs, such as aller ("to go") and parler ("to speak, talk") denote action and tend to be most often in the passé composé. While this idea is generally true, a blanket statement such as this one can be misleading. The concept of simplifying the learning task is one that should be commended. However, students will inevitably encounter examples such as:

- 4.2 Je parlais quand vous êtes entré.
(I was talking when you entered.)⁵

The problem here is that dividing the passé composé and the imperfect into the categories of action and description, respectively, is an unjustified oversimplification. "Je parlais" is an action, yet it is also a description of conditions at a certain time of reference.

Another way of presenting the action/description opposition is to say, as French: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing does, that the passé composé tells "what happened" while the imperfect tells what the accompanying conditions were:

The imperfect tells what someone used to do or was doing in the past. The passé composé tells what someone did. The passé composé expresses "what happened," the imperfect expresses "how things were." (257)

Contacts presents essentially the same explanation but adds that the choice of tense depends on two conditions: (a) What type of action is being described (passé composé for a specific action or event that began and ended at some time in the past and imperfect for an ongoing past action or event) and (b) the narrator's view of the action (passé composé for past actions occurring at a specific time and imperfect for circumstances/conditions, such as time, weather, physical appearance, etc.). While the authors of this textbook attempt to focus on what truly characterizes the aspectual distinctions between the passé composé and the imperfect by leading the student to consider the internal make-up of the "action" in consideration, the criteria that they give as supportive material for the above choices do not provide clear delineations.

The two sets of contrasting characteristics cited above (durative/nondurative and action/description) are both represented in the explanations of Langue et Langage

although exactly what is meant by the terms "moment" and "duration" is somewhat unclear and difficult to follow.

For example, the authors state:

The imperfect expresses an action that continues in the past and that is interrupted by another action. The action that continues is not a true action. The idea of duration is more important than the idea of moment." (344)

If the imperfect expresses "duration" and the passé composé expresses "moment," as the authors suggest, they seem to imply by the above explanation that the imperfect is more important than the passé composé, an obviously dangerous assumption that students might make.

Other Explanations

In addition to the widespread use of traditional descriptions of aspectual differences (listing characteristics and binary oppositions), several textbooks provide certain explanations not found in other books and, as such, require special attention. Découverte et Création, for example, appears similar to the other textbooks when it states the following:

The passé composé indicates a completed action or state. The imperfect is used when the emphasis is not on the end of the action or state, as in a description, an habitual action, etc. (224)

The distinction this book draws in further explanations between action which motivates another action and action which is a "descriptive progression" is somewhat opaque. The terms "descriptive progression" are not defined and

remain vague for the student. Nor can the student be sure of what is meant by "etc.", in the quotation above.

En Route provides a list of characteristic uses of the imperfect (for example, to describe time, weather, situations, physical characteristics, psychological states, feelings, intentions, and thoughts). A list of semantic traits such as this one covers a large territory of linguistic expression which might be difficult to recall. On the positive side, this textbook, unlike any of the others, advises the student to use the passé composé, the more neutral past tense, whenever he (the student) is unsure of which tense to use.

Aujourd'hui informs the English speaking student that his troubles with the use of the passé composé and the imperfect stem from the fact that they may both be used to translate the English simple past. This is a legitimate statement, but the textbook continues with the assertion that the imperfect and the passé composé may be used interchangeably. The idea of interchangeability of tenses may be a dangerous one for the novice French student even though the authors caution that context should be the determining factor for the correct tense. They give the following specific instructions to the student:

If the verb is of a descriptive character, . . . if it stresses the duration or continuity of the action, . . . or if it is a verb of thinking and feeling, use the imperfect. If the emphasis is on the action, . . . if the finality of the action is implicit, . . . , or if there is an indication of suddenness associated with any verb, use the passé composé. (78)

The main problem here comes with statements of somewhat vague conditions followed by a limited number of examples and only one exercise.⁶

Unlike Aujourd'hui which states that the imperfect and the passé composé may be interchangeable, Rapports affirms that these two tenses are not interchangeable for the following reasons:

- (1) The imperfect describes conditions in the past while the passé composé relates specific actions.
- (2) The imperfect expresses unspecified, repeated actions in the past; the passé composé represents a single action or a series of single actions.
- (3) The imperfect represents a background action; the passé composé represents a specific event, sometimes an interruption. (p. 231)

The third reason above, which is similar to statements found in two other textbooks (Entrée en Scène and Face à Face) that the imperfect functions to "set the scene in the past," is important to paragraph structure and to the development of a narrative. Such considerations were taken into account in the analysis of individual verb selections and errors in the test passage in Chapter Three.

Turning specifically to the textbook used in the classes which formed the two groups in the present study, it is clear that it is, in many ways, similar to the other textbooks analyzed above. Following an approach that emphasizes development of the four skills, the authors

of this particular textbook (Thème et Variations) present the past tense in the following way. After approximately ten weeks of study, the perfect is introduced, and in the following lesson, the imperfect is introduced and contrasted with the passé composé.⁷ Students are told that the imperfect fulfills a descriptive function in a narration while the passé composé is used for actions that are not continuous or descriptive in function. Students are also instructed that these distinctions in usage are subtle and require time and practice to develop a "feel" for their correct usage. Unfortunately, as this study has shown, beginning students do not generally develop that "feel." In fact, in the very textbook that advises students that practice with the passé composé and imperfect is necessary, there are only two pages of exercises specifically devoted to these distinctions. There are no follow-up activities or specific review material in subsequent lessons.

It should be noted that at the time the test for this study was administered, the third edition of Thème et Variations was being phased into the beginning French program so that students in the first-semester group were using the third edition while the second-semester students were continuing with the second edition. This fact is not a major variable as there is no significant difference between the two editions in terms of explanations and presentation of this particular grammatical point. The

only difference is that the third edition seems to emphasize to the student the necessity of distinguishing between the usages of the passé composé and the imperfect by stating that "the two tenses have their own functions and cannot be used interchangeably" (221) and by highlighting the discussion with a bold-faced heading. The third edition has included one additional exercise (227) which consists of twenty sentences relating a short story in which the students must convert the verbs from the present tense to the past.

Both editions of this textbook state that, in construction, the passé composé corresponds to the present perfect in English (that is have + past participle). The authors continue to draw on comparisons with English by including a passage in English preceded by the following instructions (information within the parentheses is found only in the third edition):

Read the following passage in English (in which a young man describes his afternoon), and decide which verbs would be in the passé composé and which would be in the imperfect. (Then compare the accompanying French version.) (Second Edition 237; Third Edition 226)

The inclusion of this passage is somewhat unexpected as it represents a rare example of this textbook's reliance on translation as a means of instruction. That is, while grammatical explanations are presented in English and English equivalents of examples are given throughout the lessons, students using this textbook are not required

to translate from one language to the other. Yet, in this case, they are asked to make interlingual comparisons. An additional difficulty lies in the fact that the authors do not clearly state whether they intend these comparisons to be semantically, or morphologically, oriented.

General Remarks

None of the textbooks cited here uses the word "aspect" to communicate to the students that "passé composé" and "imperfect" do not refer to different time periods even though they are classified and presented as different tenses. Only six textbooks attempt to explain this idea at all. One of them states that the difference between the two tenses is not a difference of time, but rather a difference of attitude, that is, different ways of viewing the past. The other five say that the choice (passé composé) vs. imperfect) depends on the speaker's perspective (how he views the action or state of being). Although these statements are a good beginning towards helping the student grasp the concepts involved, it leaves too much to the student's own interpretation. He needs concrete guidance as to exactly what is meant by "viewing the action," for it is not as arbitrary as he might assume it to be.

Two considerations stand out regarding the textbooks analyzed here:

1. Descriptions and explanations, for the most part, follow patterns suggested by traditional grammarians.

2. The concept of aspectual distinctions (passé composé vs. imperfect) is not reviewed or elaborated on elsewhere in the text after the initial introduction.⁸ Whatever review is done is left to the individual teacher, who may or may not respond to the need for specific review work and for supplementary material.⁹ The lack of formal subsequent review may explain why second-semester students do not show any improvement in percentage of correct answers over first-semester students. Such a consideration lends further support to the view that adequate and clear initial exposure to the distinction in usage between these two past tenses and thereby to the concept of aspect is essential.

Implications

The fact that the first-semester students answered correctly 80% of the time (of all possible responses) shows that they are gaining some understanding of these concepts. But, the fact that the second-semester students did not perform any better than the first-semester students leads to three possible conclusions:

1. Initial understanding is not deep enough to compensate for the detrimental effects of time. That is, students' understanding is not heightened or reinforced as time of exposure to the language increases but is actually diminished slightly, suggesting that preliminary explanations are not adequate enough to overcome the dampening effect of time.

2. Preliminary explanations do not form a sufficient foundation for the analyses of slightly more advanced students. The basis is not strong enough to yield clear responses when students reach the level of making and examining choices.

3. The concept is not reinforced as other materials are learned.

New Approaches

All three of these conclusions point directly to the need for presenting this material to students in such a way that they have a clear, uncluttered view of how the two tenses are used--a view that, instead of being weakened with additional time and instruction, remains clear and is actually reinforced. Since current explanations that rely mainly on traditional approaches fail to provide such a view, it seems more likely that the mathematical model of aspect as presented by M. Mahler and the visual approaches of Monnerie and Moore would yield more satisfactory results. Both of these approaches appeal not to abstract conceptualization as do the vague lists of usages and complicated terminology of traditional approaches but rather to the concrete, visualizing capacities of the learner.

Mahler assumes the following position in discussing aspect: The point of departure is not the morphology of verbs but the semantics of language (Spatial Delineation

of Temporal Structures in French 105). Aspectual distinctions should not be thought of as an inventory of uses of tenses but as an examination of how the notions of space are realized in French through temporal expression. In other words, the most appropriate way to represent aspect is through the use of a mathematical number line which symbolizes time and subsets of that line which are equivalent to events. The subsets may be represented in the following manner:



Figure 1. Subsets of Time Line

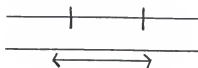
An event that has a beginning and/or an end, inherent or expressed, even if these points coincide, is considered closed (closed, half-open, half-closed). The closed sets correspond to the uses of the passé composé. All open sets, those with no beginning or ending points, correspond to the uses of the imperfect. That is, an event which is described as ongoing, without consideration of its beginning or ending, is plotted as an open interval. It is logical to associate the imperfect with the open interval of a time line. A verb in the imperfect describes an event which was "ongoing." In some sense, an event

in the imperfect has no beginning or end. On the other hand, a verb in the passé composé has a beginning and end inherent in the perfect formulation. It corresponds to the closed interval which also has beginning and ending points. An event represented by an open interval is necessarily nonpunctual. But not all nonpunctual events necessarily correspond to the imperfect. Whenever duration is specified, it becomes incompatible with the imperfect, as witnessed by example 4.1, cited several times earlier:

4.1 "J'ai habité en Géorgie de 1957 à 1980."

Some of Mahler's explanations concerning pendant, compound sentences, and subordinate clauses, for example, are somewhat involved for the beginning language student as they relate to linguistic situations which the students will probably not encounter until more advanced levels of study. However, the general concept described above is certainly appropriate for the students' comprehension and level of study and could be easily adapted for classroom presentation.

What is essential to Mahler's model is the visual orientation, an important characteristic found also in Moore (1981). She suggests the use of a graphic (also a time line) which represents the concept of "limited" and "unlimited" (passé composé and imperfect, respectively) depicted below:¹⁰



passé composé = limited

imperfect = unlimited

Such a visual depiction will aid in developing a clear picture in each student's mind--a picture which will be reinforced by subsequent learning, particularly of additional verb tenses.¹¹

Moore's goal is to present aspect in such a way that avoids traditional listings of meanings and that encourages students not to resort to their native language, thereby discouraging erroneous comparisons. The test conducted for this study fails to indicate conclusively whether students are indeed making erroneous comparisons (English to French) though they are making erroneous choices (see the discussion of errors in Chapter Three).

The two approaches of Mahler and Moore, presented above, could be combined into one instructional graphic while, at the same time, retaining the fundamental models of both authors. The chart below represents one possibility:



Figure 2

The closed dots reinforce the idea of a closed set. The open dot suggests the openness (no stated endpoints) that characterizes the imperfect.

Sequencing of Materials

The sixteen textbooks examined in this study show a wide variation concerning the point at which the concept of past time is first introduced to the beginning language

students. In some texts, the introduction is quite early in the course (fourth to sixth lesson) while for several others it is much later (nineteenth or twentieth lesson). The majority, however, position the first past tense somewhere between the eighth to the fifteenth lesson. In most cases, this positioning would situate the topic near the end of a regular first-semester course.

Concerning the sequencing of the past tenses, there is more congruity among the textbooks. Of these sixteen books, approximately one third introduce both the imperfect and the perfect simultaneously, that is, in the same lesson.¹² Explanations of the tenses are followed by drilling the forms and the usages and by contrasting the two tenses. The other two thirds of the textbooks all present the perfect (passé composé) in one lesson and in some later lesson, the imperfect.¹³

Several recent articles are in disagreement concerning the order of study of the past tenses. Moore calls for the introduction of the imperfect to precede any acquaintance with the perfect (41). Her reasoning is based on morphological similarities between the present tense and the imperfect tense, both of which are simple verb forms and, therefore, presumed to pose a less difficult task for the student.¹⁴ It should be noted that Moore is a strong advocate of the benefits of using contrastive analysis in second language instruction. While her view that students will acquire

the imperfect more easily through association with a form which they already control seems plausible, the results of this particular study have shown that correspondence of forms may not be a primary factor.

Cox, like Moore, asserts that the imperfect is morphologically less complex than the passé composé and has fewer irregularities (239). But his contentions that it is the imperfect which is usually presented first due to its formal correspondence with the English simple past are not supported in view of the present findings from the test data as well as from the textbook analyses. In spite of the above named contentions, Cox supports the introduction of the passé composé, the form which he believes to be more difficult due to its unfamiliarity to English speakers, before the imperfect. According to Cox, after students have gained a functional understanding of the passé composé, then the imperfect may be introduced as the form for all other cases. Problems with this approach surface immediately. Firstly, it is not proven that students view the passé composé as the more difficult tense to work with. To base such an assumption on morphological similarities or dissimilarities is not sufficient, as the present study has shown. Secondly, what guidelines can the teacher use to accurately assess when the students have gained sufficient "functional understanding" of the passé composé so that the imperfect may be introduced?

While the reasons described to this point for the study of the passé composé before the imperfect lack an empirical basis, the introduction of the passé composé before the imperfect appears to be a more logical sequencing, particularly with a view towards the framework of instruction suggested in this chapter. Since students would be working with a time line having definite divisions for tense (past/present) and subdivisions for aspect (perfect/imperfect), to give them first of all a concept that deals with a closed ("limited") set is an appropriate and reasonable point of departure for instruction in the past verb usages. The idea of a closed set having beginning and ending points parallels conceptually the idea of concreteness which has been called for throughout this paper. Afterwards, the idea of "unlimited" (represented by the open set) may be introduced as a contrast. Experimentation would prove how effective this model of aspect would be and whether or not the presentation of the two verb forms should be simultaneous. The problem with simultaneous presentation is that students are asked to learn two new paradigms at the same time as well as the different usages of each one. Since the explanation of one tense will necessarily precede the other, even in the same lesson, it is proposed here that the introduction of these two past tenses be in separate lessons and that the passé composé precede the imperfect for the reasons given above.

Suggestions then for the instructional presentation of the passé composé and the imperfect include the following:

1. an emphasis on the concept of aspect (that passé composé and imperfect in reality do not refer to separate tenses, or time periods)
2. an approach that relies on concrete visualization of the distinctions
3. a sequencing that places study of the passé composé before the imperfect
4. the inclusion of review material to reinforce the original presentation

Conclusion

This study reviews the difficulties associated with the distinctions in usage between the perfect and the imperfect in French, specifically, the passé composé and the imparfait, and makes some pedagogical suggestions. It is not the intention of this study to herald a new method nor to claim a final solution to this problem. Certainly there is no panacea to be found with this or any approach, for each learning situation can involve a new variable. Each student is an individual, with personal study habits and personal abilities. But, clearly, more effective language instruction is called for, and the approach described here with its emphasis on simplicity, clarity, and concreteness seems likely to be more effective than those currently found in language manuals.

Other aspects of instruction must coincide to bring about this effectiveness. For example:

1. Whether the class is taught in French (as in the Direct Method) or in English, the presentation of the topic must be accompanied by clear graphics.
2. Exercises should be in context. According to Moore, exercises in context diminish the student's tendency to translate and encourage intuitive comprehension. Similarly, Silva-Corvalán ("A Speech Event Analysis of Tense and Aspect") states that decontextualized examples may be misleading. Allen and Valette recommend, for example, the use of concrete questions rather than such abstract ones as "What tense do you use for repeated past actions?" (92-3). Not only does meaningful context aid comprehension but it may also play a role in improving retention.
3. The sequencing of material is an important factor.

In conclusion, the following remarks may be made in view of the results of this study. Firstly, students who have had more class exposure to and grammatical instruction in a second language do not necessarily show any greater control of a particular part of the structural system of that language than students with more limited exposure. An interesting dimension would be to determine whether such students reflect higher achievement in other parts of the structural system (in French, for example, future

studies could focus on students' control of the partitive, the use of the definite and indefinite articles, the placement of the qualifying epithet, etc.)

Secondly, this lack of improvement points to several issues in second language acquisition, primarily the role of native language interference as a cause of errors. In this study, the contrastive analysis hypothesis was not conclusively supported. In addition, since 80% of all students did show some understanding of the point in question, the major cause of errors does not seem to be inherent difficulty in the target language. These results tend to lend support to those of other researchers and educators who maintain that other factors, such as type of instruction, have a determining role. Brown (1966), for example, states that one third of students' errors are caused not by the native language or by the target language but by a combination of the two and by other factors. Such a statement may seem contradictory, or at best, ambiguous. But what it highlights is the complex nature of language learning and, therefore, of language instruction.

Finally, the fact that beginning students have not benefited substantially from traditional instruction in aspect suggests that they may require a newer, differently oriented approach. The approach suggested in this chapter is one possibility which meets such specifications and

which holds up to grammatical questioning. The test of its actual efficiency with students is the topic of an additional study, but there is no denying the need for an innovative approach.

The prognosis for success of this approach is substantiated by the focus in twentieth century society on concrete images and visual appeal. Students in the language classrooms of the 1980's are accustomed to visual representations in other fields, and they bring this orientation with them to language study. Many of them are adept at operating computers whether for entertainment or for study. As such they have a more visual orientation to learning than their counterparts of previous years. This is not to say that all students could not have benefited from a more concrete approach such as this one; only that today's students may be even more receptive to it. If students are more receptive and if the presentation is concise, clear, and applicable to the majority of linguistic situations they encounter, then language teaching will have developed an approach that is both serviceable and beneficial to all those involved in second language acquisition.

Notes

¹The differences between the analytic style and the gestalt style are the subject of a study conducted by Peters in Diller (37-49).

²These sixteen textbooks, with two exceptions, are also cited in a list of twenty-two popular French textbooks for elementary students in an article which appears in the Modern Language Journal, Spring 1986 (Walz, "Is Oral Proficiency Possible with Today's French Textbooks?").

³Unquestionably, the primary explanatory material the students in the present study received derived from the textbook used in their classes. But, since many of the students came from different backgrounds of language study, it is useful to consider the grammatical treatments of other textbooks as well. Furthermore, the inclusion of additional textbooks expands the scope of this study to consider what types of instruction beginning students nationwide may be receiving on this particular part of the grammatical system of French.

⁴All textbook explanations that are given in French (four out of the sixteen books) have been translated here into English. These books are Parole et Pensée, Langue et Langage, Découverte et Création, and Entrée en Scène.

⁵In most first year textbooks under the section dealing with passé composé versus imparfait, one frequently encounters the question:

a. "Que faisiez-vous quand je suis entré(e)?"

"What were you doing when I entered (the classroom)?"

The example cited here ("Je parlais quand vous êtes entré.") is a logical possible response. Je parlais ("I was talking") is an "action" verb, but it is used in the imperfect.

⁶Interestingly, this textbook, which the authors suggest may also serve as part of an intermediate program, is one of two of the sixteen textbooks analyzed here that refer to the passé composé as the "present perfect." This reference is highly misleading should the student

associate the use of the passé composé exclusively with the English present perfect. Consider the following example:

a. "I read that book yesterday."

J'ai lu ce livre hier.

The verb must be in the passé composé but the English, "I have read that book yesterday," is not permissible, as the present perfect is not compatible with a specific past time reference.

⁷The authors of the text suggest that each lesson is designed to be covered in approximately one week of college classes.

⁸Other grammatical points that frequently pose problems to nonnative speakers of French do resurface and are commented on (for example, du > de in a negative sentence). Only three of the sixteen textbooks discussed here provide a formal review (summary of usages of passé composé/imperfect in subsequent lessons), and only one provides follow-up exercises.

⁹The instructors of the students in this study said that they did try to emphasize the distinctions in aspect, but that it was difficult to devote sufficient class time to the problem. They all stated, however, that second-semester students did have the opportunity to hear both the passé composé and the imperfect used correctly in class by the instructor, and although the material was not specifically reviewed in separate grammatical sections or drills, both forms did appear in exercises, dialogues, and cultural readings throughout the textbook.

¹⁰Monnerie also uses the terms "limited" and "unlimited" in discussing these concepts.

¹¹Two of the textbooks studied earlier in this chapter discuss the use of a time line as part of their explanatory material on the passé composé and imperfect (Aujourd'hui, Départ--Arrivée). Thème et Variations also uses a graphic showing a wavy line as representative of the imperfect and a straight line, or line segment, as representative of the passé composé. These representations, though encouraging for their appeal to the visual side of learning, are not as concise as those of Moore.

¹²When the tenses are presented in the same lesson, the order of presentation does not seem to follow a pattern (some discuss the perfect first and others, the imperfect).

¹³ Generally the imperfect is introduced within the next two lessons following the introduction of the passé composé though some books withhold the presentation of the imperfect for anywhere from four to nine lessons later.

¹⁴ Another point in favor of Moore's support of introducing the imperfect first because of its similarity to the present tense is its morphological composition: the imperfect form is best derived by second language learners by taking the present tense, first person plural (for example: nous parlons--we are speaking), removing the personal ending--ons, and adding the imperfect endings (je parlais, etc.).

APPENDIX A
TEST PASSAGE

Samedi dernier, comme | il a fait | beau, | j'ai décidé |
| il faisait | | je décidais |

d'aller à Paynes Prairie avec mon ami, Bob. | Nous n'avons pas eu |
| Nous n'avions pas |

beaucoup de travail pour nos classes et | nous avons voulu | faire
| nous voulions |

de l'exercice physique. | Nous sommes partis | de bonne heure en
| Nous partions |

voiture. Très vite, | nous sommes sortis | du campus.
| nous sortions |

| Nous avons traversé | des quartiers modernes de Gainesville.
| Nous traversons |

Enfin, | nous sommes arrivés | à destination.
| nous arrivions |

| Nous sommes montés | dans l'observatoire de Paynes Prairie.
| Nous montions |

Quel beau panorama! La prairie | a été | immense et jolie. Les
| était |

feuilles des grands arbres | ont commencé | à changer de couleur.
| commençaient |

Les oiseaux | ont chanté |
| chantaient |

| Nous avons marché | pendant trois heures à travers la prairie.
| Nous marchions |

A midi, | nous avons pris | notre déjeuner à côté d'un grand arbre.
| nous prenions |

| Nous avons mangé | des fruits, et après, | nous avons continué |
| Nous mangions | | nous continuions |

notre promenade.

APPENDIX B
SUM TOTAL OF ERRORS OF GROUPS PER VERB

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
faisait	21	17
j'ai décidé	20	3
n'avions pas	132	81
voulions	106	44
sommes partis	52	13
sommes sortis	49	27
avons traversé	59	40
sommes arrivés	28	8
sommes montés	51	25
était	15	3
commençaient	67	35
chantaient	75	31
avons marché	109	57
avons pris	23	14
avons mangé	53	25
avons continué	119	67

total of errors	979	490

APPENDIX C
LIST OF TEXTBOOKS
(arranged alphabetically by title)

- Aujourd'hui. 3rd ed. Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1986.
- Bonjour, ça va? New York: Random House, 1983.
- Contacts. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985.
- Découverte et Création. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985.
- Départ-Arrivée. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.
- En Route. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986.
- Entrée en Scène. New York: Random House, 1985.
- Face à Face. Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1985.
- French: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. 4th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1984.
- Invitation. 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984.
- Langue et Langage. 3rd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979.
- Parole et Pensée. 3rd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- Perspectives (de France). 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1982.
- Rapports. Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1985.
- Rendez-vous. New York: Random House, 1982.
- Thème et Variations. 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tamela E. Grinstead was born on December 31, 1957, in Macon, Georgia, where she also attended elementary and secondary school, graduating as salutatorian of the class of 1976.

From 1976 to 1980, she attended Wesleyan College as a Pierce Honor Scholar. During that time she received the Student Government Service Award and the Day Student Scholarship. Academic honors included membership in Phi Kappa Phi, president of Phi Sigma Iota Foreign Language Honor Society, president of Mortar Board National Senior Honor Society, and recipient of Senior Departmental Honors. She graduated, magna cum laude, with a degree in French and Spanish.

In 1980, she entered the graduate program of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Florida with a graduate fellowship. She received her Masters of Arts degree in 1982 with a major in French and a minor in Spanish. In 1982, she began her doctoral studies at the University of Florida, majoring in French and minoring in Linguistics.

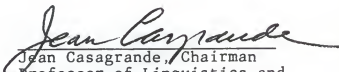
In connection with the minor, she has received the University of Florida's certificate for Teaching English as a Second Language and has completed ACTFL's training program for certification as an oral proficiency tester of English as a Second Language.

Throughout her graduate studies, she has held teaching assistantships in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. In 1984, she was recognized for excellence in teaching among graduate teaching assistants in a university-wide competition.

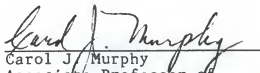
At the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (Spring 1986), she presented a study entitled, "Listeners' Reactions to Ethnic and Regional Accents in Broadcasting." She will be presenting papers at the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (Fall 1986) and the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference (Spring 1987).

Tamela has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of French at Wesleyan College (Macon, Georgia).

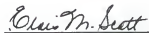
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Jean Casagrande, Chairman
Professor of Linguistics and
Romance Languages

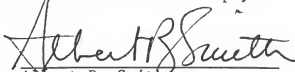
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Carol J. Murphy
Associate Professor of
Romance Languages & Literatures

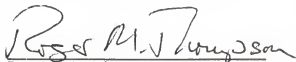
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Elois M. Scott
Associate Professor of
Instruction and Curriculum

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Albert B. Smith
Professor of Romance
Languages

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Roger M. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" being more prominent and the last name "Thompson" written in a continuous script.

Roger M. Thompson
Associate Professor of English
and Linguistics

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August, 1986

Dean, Graduate School